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# "MR. REPUBLICAN" IS STILL SHARP AT 91

Edwin F. Jaeckle recalls his political wars and  
characteristically looks to the future.

In national GOP circles, one name that still inspires awe is Edwin F. Jaeckle '15. A kingmaker in the 1930s and 1940s when bosses ruled the parties, Jaeckle hasn't been politically active since the presidential race in '48. "When I quit, I quit," he says. Yet, to this day Jaeckle is known affectionately as "Mr. Republican" and remains one of Buffalo's most prominent and prosperous lawyers.

Always impeccably dressed, he is still impressive to behold, standing over six-feet tall, his hair as snow white as his starched shirt. When he isn't travelling with his wife Erma to Florida, California, or somewhere equally glamorous, a chauffeured limousine taxis him from their home in the Park Lane Apartments on Gates Circle to his splendid new offices in the Norstar building. At 91, he is the most senior partner in the respected law firm of Jaeckle, Fleischmann & Mugel. He continues to concentrate on corporation, insurance, utility and estate matters "whenever I'm in town."

Recalling some of the behind-the-scenes maneuvers in his legendary political career, Jaeckle is witty, candid and thoroughly charming. His memory for names, dates and conversations that occurred seventy or so years ago is astonishing. The recollections roll off his tongue as though it all happened yesterday.

Jaeckle was Erie County Republican Chairman from 1935 until 1948, and led New York State's Republican forces and fortunes from 1940 to 1944. Any desire to run for elective office himself was probably dispelled forever in 1937 after he was defeated for Mayor by Thomas L. Holling.

No matter. As State GOP chairman, he launched the political career of the late Gov. Thomas E. Dewey, governor of New York for 12 years. Jaeckle served as Dewey's campaign general for all three of his victorious statewide races.

Jaeckle also engineered both Dewey's nominations, in 1944 and 1948, as the Republic party's candidate for president of the United States.

While Jaeckle helped lead both campaigns, the personal relationship between the two strong-willed men was more often strained than smooth. In the race against President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944, Jaeckle broke with Gov. Dewey over strategy.

Later reconciled, Jaeckle again joined Dewey's team for the battle against President Harry S. Truman. "We were a strong combination. There was mutual respect," says Jaeckle. "I was like a trainer with a good horse."

Though Truman won the election, Jaeckle is still convinced Dewey would have made a great president.

"Office-holders should stick to governing and let the political pros make the campaign decisions. But Dewey always had to do things his way. I told him that as a former District Attorney he should attack Truman, that he couldn't be a milquetoast and expect to win. But he refused to listen," Jaeckle recalls.

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The saga of Edwin F. Jaeckle is one of power tempered by integrity. "I had my own ideas how things should be done," says the elder statesman, who never earned a dime from any political job while he was County and State party chairman. Neither would he take any business that came to him through political connections. Nor would he permit anyone in his firm to take it.

"I made a financial sacrifice because I thought it was wrong to benefit from a public job while party chairman. And though I know State chairmen are paid today, I still think it's wrong. I believe politics is a public service and a public trust . . . and I felt I was making a contribution to the community."

Jaeckle attributes much of his political strength to this financial independence. "I could walk away anytime I wanted to. That was always one of my great troubles with Gov. Dewey. I refused to take a patronage job and he didn't like that."

Jaeckle didn't accept a public position until after he retired as State chairman. Gov. Dewey appointed him to the State Laws Revision Commission in 1949 and he served until 1956.

Jaeckle is proud that during his 13-year tenure as chairman there wasn't a single political scandal in the county. He was bewildered by Watergate and can't understand how President Nixon could have permitted it to happen, branding Nixon a "cheap politician."

His zeal for clean government also extends to fiscal responsibility. When he left the county chairmanship there was \$150,000 in the GOP kitty and "all the bills were paid." After Gov. Dewey beat Wendell Willkie in 1944, there was \$212,000 left in the Republican State treasury. "We never had a dinner to mop up deficits," he says. "I ran the party like a business."

He is appalled at what it costs to run for office today, recalling that when Gov. Dewey ran for governor in 1942, "We only spent \$200,000 on his entire campaign."

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Jaeckle brought vision and imagination to his political career. He had the ability to see those things that would benefit the long term future of Western New York. During the Dewey years, he convinced the

governor to expand Buffalo's Cancer Institute into a major research center, which has since developed into the internationally renowned Roswell Park Memorial Institute. Along with former Kenmore school principal Frank C. Moore, who later became Lt. Gov. Moore, Jaeckle also played a leading role in helping the formerly private University of Buffalo to merge with the State University of New York.

Jaeckle was born and raised at 26 Lemon Street in the "fruitbelt" section of Buffalo. He is third generation American on both sides of his family, the son of Jacob Jaeckle, a building contractor and furniture manufacturer, and Mary Marx Jaeckle. "They were just good, hearty German-American people who worked like hell," declares their son.

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*"In 1915, the law school consisted of two offices in the Ellicott Square. One was supposedly a library and the other was the classroom. Tuition was \$50."*

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It was his mother who encouraged him to go into law. After attending Public School 37 and graduating from Masten Park High School, Jaeckle went straight to UB Law School.

"In 1915, the law school consisted of two offices in the Ellicott Square. One was supposedly a library and the other was the classroom. Tuition was \$50. We had one paid instructor, Dean Carlos Alden, who was an exceptional teacher. The other attorneys were volunteers. Many of them weren't prepared. Some didn't show up. It

was makeshift, but apparently, it had its results. There were 24 in my graduating class. I believe I'm the only one left."

After graduating from law school, he went to work as a clerk for Robert F. Schelling, a friend of his mother's. The prevailing rate was \$5 per week. Jaeckle earned \$8.

Jaeckle first became interested in politics in 1917 when Leo J. Schmidt, a candidate for Republican State Committeeman and a friend of the family, urged him to run for Ward Supervisor. By working the saloons he won the election. The early victory ignited Jaeckle's lifelong passion for politics.

At the time, he was practicing law part-time. "It was simple then . . . I'd close a real estate deal, draw up a will, get the paperwork for a license or handle some simple litigation—nothing of consequence. I'd charge a dollar or two."

Over the years, Jaeckle has practiced with many outstanding leaders of the bar. After Robert Schelling died in 1916, he continued practicing with Schelling's brother and partner Edward J. Garono until 1921, when they joined the firm of Palmer, Hauck and Wickser.

In 1932, Jaeckle and Garono left to join Carleton E. Ladd to form Ladd, Garono & Jaeckle. Joseph Swart, Charles J. Wick and Harry Kelly became partners in this firm. It was in 1959 that Jaeckle's firm joined forces with Manly and Adelbert Fleischmann and Owen Augspurger to form Jaeckle, Fleischmann, Kelly, Swart, & Augspurger, forerunner to Jaeckle, Fleischmann and Mugel.

Among a lengthy list of honors and awards Jaeckle has received is the University of Buffalo's Chancellor's Medal in 1969. In 1976, he became the first person to receive a special distinguished alumni award from the UB Law School and Law Alumni Association. The award was later named for him, as was the Law School's Jaeckle Center for State and Local Government Law, which was established in 1980.

"It's been fun. I have no regrets," Jaeckle says.

True to form, he is focused on the future and recently accepted the Law School's invitation to be Honorary Chairman of its 100th birthday celebration next year. ■



Erma and Edwin F. Jaeckle